

Remarks of Camille Eskell  
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For the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24  
Teacher Certification and Evaluation

February 21, 2012

I am a teacher in the Westport public school system with a Master Degree and 60+ additional graduate credits as a professional educator.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the disturbing proposals in Senate Bill #24, which seem to be rife with policies that would undermine the education of our students at a time when American education is woefully slipping in its global standing. Initiatives abound regarding how to make our students ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century—that cannot be accomplished when standards for teachers are to be compromised as suggested by the tenets of this proposal.

My focus here is primarily on the consequences of altering teacher certification, evaluation and salary advancement requirements.

To leave the way a teacher is evaluated for tenure to one person, the principal is dangerous and prohibitively unfair, especially in view of the proposed limitations on arbitration. We all know that in work situations every employee is not regarded with equal fairness by administrators due to underlying personal issues. Not only is this concept unsound in that it dramatically reduces security for teachers, it also creates financial havoc as well: if an administrator deems the teacher below standard, then the salary that teacher has earned lowers dramatically, a “bouncing ball” effect. Teachers are valued economically because they are thought of generally as steady risks in the marketplace. How can teachers provide livings for themselves and their families, afford mortgages, etc., with the threat of being demoted by the judgment of one person? Where is the check and balance system here?

If attracting talented, enthusiastic and effective teachers is a goal to better education, why would a potential candidate want to enter the teaching field without some measure of job security and salary; particularly when teacher earnings are traditionally lower than other professions to begin with? And how to retain the experienced, highly-trained teachers we already have in the system when the need to support their own families propels them to another field that respects, values and properly compensates their professional attributes?

In lowering professional standards in teacher education and training, and repealing the rigorous certification standards that have distinguished the Connecticut education system, the

educational level in our state will drop. Obtaining a master's degree requires further effort and expense on the part of a Connecticut teacher, but benefits the students in having better-trained teachers. The proposed system squeezes highly-trained teachers in terms of retaining their right, status, and salaries, and on the other hand, invites unqualified applicants to become teachers in Connecticut. What sense does this make?

Teaching is a difficult and tiring job, and much is expected of them on all levels. I urge you to reject Governor Malloy's Senate Bill #24. Establishing new evaluation procedures as described in the bill, thereby threatening salary stability, weakening due process for tenure retention, and diminishing certification requirements so that less qualified individuals are teaching our children would be damaging to the education system, and would take years to repair. Passing the bill affects far more than the livelihood of thousands of teachers, it would have a profound long-term and negative impact on the quality of our children's education.